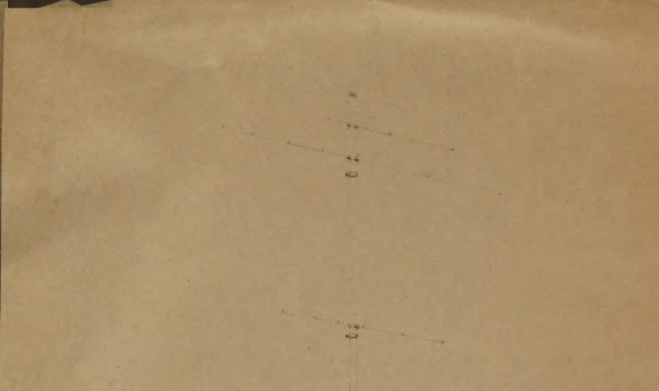
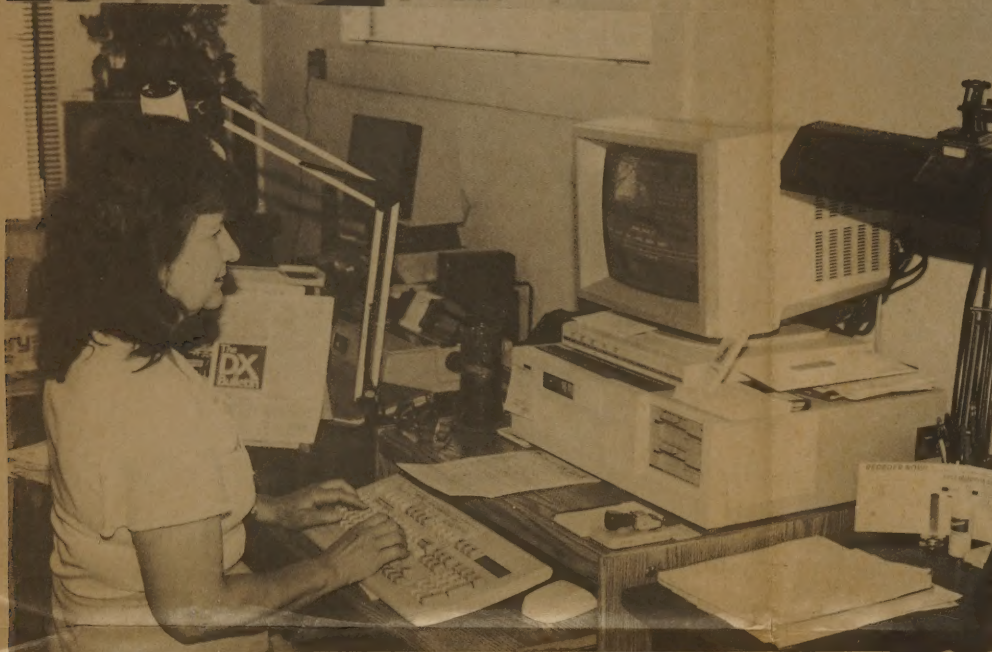




# THE W6GO/K6HHD QSL MANAGER LIST SPECIAL ISSUE NO. 100A

To commemorate our 100th issue of The W6GO/K6HHD QSL Manager List, we are pleased to bring you this special insert. The articles titled *Successful QSLing* and *QSL Managers* are reprints from previous issues. The Article titled *The List Process* is presented here, along with some pictures to give you an idea of what goes into preparing the list for you.

Pictures: Starting above and progressing counterclockwise: Placing the antennas and mast on top of the tower. Jan gets lots of help pasting up the masters. Telling the computer about QSL managers. Fluffy four-legged friend helps open the mail. The labeler does its stuff. Our renovated farm house and antennas. On the other side, Jan feeds her fowl friends. Jay holds the TDXB "#1" award earned in 1987 (See January 1988 73 Magazine). K6FO flying around shooting a video tape of the tower installation (It's available for club meetings). Pictures by K6HHD, K6FO, N6HYK, WZ6Z and W6QEU.







### QSL MANAGERS

QSL managers are persons who, for various reasons, have accepted the chore of answering QSL requests for other stations. The primary objective for the majority of these folks is to make it easier for many people to obtain QSO confirmations from DX stations. These folks work hard to make it easier and more economical for you to get some very rare QSLs.

When you send a request to a QSL manager, make certain you have carefully filled out your QSL card. It should be readable, have the correct Universal Time, correct date, and correct band of operation. Send a self-addressed envelope with return postage of either stamps, IRCs, or dollar bill (often referred to as a "green stamp"). QSL managers cannot afford to pay postage or buy envelopes to send cards to you.

Some QSL managers will answer cards via the bureau, many will not.

QSL managers profit only from the satisfaction they receive for doing a good job. In spite of anything you may have thought or heard, there is no monetary profit in being a QSL manager. Quite the contrary, many who hope only to break even find themselves spending their own hard earned dollars to complete the chore they have accepted. For every one of you who send along a "green stamp" or extra IRCs there are probably two others who send only a QSL card, expecting one in return. Even though you always carefully log proper date, time and band of contact, and just as carefully fill out the QSL card, there are those who get one or more of these important facts wrong. Most QSL managers spend extra (precious) time attempting to find these contacts in the log before returning the cards unanswered.

QSL managers answer QSL requests when they can verify the contact. The majority do this after receiving copies of the logs from the stations they manage. A few verify contacts on the air. Either way, there is often a delay in the ability to verify contacts. Most QSL managers answer QSL requests as soon as they are able to do so. This sometimes means delays of six months or longer only because they are unable to obtain logs or confirmations in a timely manner.

Ninety nine per cent or more of the QSL managers are honest, conscientious, hard working folks, who are doing the best job they are able to do to help you obtain QSL cards. Patience is the byword for obtaining QSL cards. If you are guilty of writing an impatient, passionate plea to a manager suggesting that he (she) is not doing the best job possible in answering QSLs, you had better be very sure that you have not committed one of the above mentioned "sins" in submitting your QSL request. And PLEASE be quite certain that you have allowed enough time for the manager to obtain logs before you take him (her) to task for taking so long.

## THE W6GO/K6HHD QSL MANAGER LIST SPECIAL ISSUE NO. 100A

### SUCCESSFUL QSLING

Getting QSLs is important to you. If it wasn't you would have little interest in this publication. Our goal is to help you get those important QSL cards. We have been gathering information from many sources and feel that you will find the following quite useful.

#### YOUR QSL CARD

All of the necessary information INCLUDING YOUR CALL should be on one side of your card. Managers hate having to turn cards over to find the call. It is especially time consuming for those managers handling expedition cards. It is fine to have a two sided card but PLEASE make sure your call is ALSO included on the side with the QSO information.

#### BASICS

USE 24 HOUR UTC. WRITE OUT the name of the month. Write or print CLEARLY. ALWAYS send SASE or SAE and return postage. Send separate return envelopes for each card desired. If you fold anything place it in the envelope with the fold on the bottom. BE PATIENT.

#### EXPLANATIONS

If you keep your log in Universal Coordinated Time (UTC) than the time on your card will agree with the time in the DX station's log and save the manager countless hours. We will continue to harp on this point until we convince you all that you must have a clock (preferably 24 hour clock) in your hamshack that tells time in the International standard. Formerly referred to as GMT, also referred to as ZULU time by members of the military and MARS members. KEEP YOUR LOG IN UTC.

REMEMBER that the date changes at 0000. This is early evening in the U.S. (4 p.m. PST and 7 p.m. EST).

If you work a station on April 1, 1987 and you put 4/1/87 on the card and then send it to an overseas country there will be a problem. Most everyone but the U.S. abbreviates date with the day, month, year; someone outside the U.S. will read that date as January 4, 1987. Therefore, avoid confusion by writing out the NAME of the month. The biggest headache that QSL Managers have is trying to figure out the time and date that you worked their stations!

Be sure that all entries on your card are readable. If your handwriting is poor, please print. If the manager of a DX station cannot decipher your writing you may get your card back or it may be filed in the "round file" and you get no return QSL. Do not correct mistakes, make a new card. Correcting errors on a card that is later used to apply for awards could cause that card to be disqualified as "altered".

SASE stands for "Self Addressed Stamped Envelope" and SAE is "Self Addressed Envelope". ALWAYS send at least one SASE or SAE. If your request is for several cards, and especially if it is for more than one station that is handled by the manager, send more than one envelope or be prepared to wait much longer for those cards. Postage expenses come out of the manager's pocket. Standard letter size envelopes are preferred by most managers. If you don't send some means for returning your card, it may come back via the bureau or perhaps NOT AT ALL. (Some managers refuse to answer bureau cards.) When you send a request to an overseas manager or direct to the station you want the card from, include IRCs (International Reply Coupons) for return postage AND a SAE. Some folks send "greentags" (US dollar bills) for return postage. Please use discretion when sending dollars overseas. They are good most everywhere. However, there are a few places where you may get the person on the other end in trouble by sending money, or, he may never receive it. Mail theft is quite common in some areas of the world.

If you fold your SASE put the fold in the bottom of the envelope in which you enclose it. Many SASE's have been cut in half by the letter opener because the fold was at the top!

BE PATIENT. Managers have various ways of receiving the log information, but the most common is via the mail. Sometimes it may take six months due to lack of mail service to some remote islands. If the operation was a DXpedition the cards may not be printed until the operation is completed and if picture QSLs are to be printed they take extra long.

QSLing is expensive. There is no way around it. Just remember that it is also costly for the fellow on the other end. And the more in demand he is, the more expensive it is for him. Consider the stations most in demand in remote areas of the world. (I can think of at least two examples of island countries where there is only one active amateur radio operator in the whole country.) They must buy literally thousands of cards to answer that demand. If they were also expected to QSL via the bureau, their bureau may be a very long way away from them or they may not have a bureau. Just the postage to send several hundred cards to the bureau for distribution may be a prohibitive expense. So, the rarer the station, the less likely it is you can expect a card "via the bureau". You must share the expense by making it easy for the station to return his card to you.

### THE LIST PROCESS by W6GO

Ever wonder just what Jan, K6HHD, goes through to bring you the most accurate and up-to-date QSL manager list available? Well, hold on to your seats, and I will try to give you an idea.

#### Hardware and Software

Several computer databases are involved. At present, the database program in use is Paradox (2.01 and 2.03/386), however, for years, before we moved off of the CP/M machine on to the IBM, we used Datastar. Many processes are involved in the preparation of the data for print; most of them are now done as Paradox "scripts", however, many are in compiled QuickBasic (4.0). Several computers are used, including an IBM PC-AT (not a clone) and a NEC PowerMate 386.

#### Data Sources

During the month, Jan receives lots and lots of QSL manager information. Among others, she receives QRLZ DX (WSKNE), The DX Bulletin (VP2ML), Inside DX (NZAU), DXNS (G4DYO), DX-NL (DL3RK), Japan DX News (JH1FDF), Long Skip (VE3IPR), Le Nouvelles DX (F6AJA), Long Island DX Bulletin (W2IYX), Heard Island DX Association Newsletter (VK9NS), QST (W1YL), Worldradio (N6JM), CQ Magazine (W6AUD), K4IF (W7OM), 73 Magazine (VP2ML), Japan CQ Magazine (JA3BG), Radiosporting (VE3BMV), and many other publications. She gets letters from subscribers, letters from expeditors, letters from managers, phone calls from all over the world, input from members of the Northern California DX Club (NCDXC), from members of the River City DX Club (RCDXC), and from listening on the bands.

#### Build Intermediate Database

Jan extracts the information from all of these sources and places the information in an intermediate database. This database contains all of the current data plus the information from past months that was not used to update the information printed in the list. Each record in the intermediate database includes the DX Station call, the QSL routing, the source of the information and the date of the entry. Typically, Jan inputs over 2000 records into this database each month.

#### Select Data to be Printed

When the cutoff date is reached for the next issue, Jan reviews the intermediate database, comparing it to the information printed in the previous issue of the list. After sorting the new data by DX call sign, Jan uses a split-screen display to show both the intermediate data and the list as printed the previous month. She decides what to do with the information gleaned from the current month's input. If the information is already printed, then it is marked "Activity" and later updates the main database to show current activity. If the information was not printed in the last list, then Jan makes a decision whether or not to include it in the next list. Her decision is based upon several factors; who reported the QSL information, how many different sources reported the same information, and upon a non-computer-quantifiable "Jan-sense". If she decides to use the information, then the it is marked in the split screen mode for addition to the main database. Sketchy information that doesn't pass her quality test is left in the intermediate database for review again next month when additional data may surface.

#### Extract and Prune

When Jan has reviewed the entire intermediate database, then the items marked for addition are added to the current validated database as printed in the previous issue. The intermediate database is then "pruned" to a manageable size by removing data now passed on to the current database for print and also removing very old data that was never used for print. The intermediate database varies in size during the month from 4000 to 7000 records.

#### Delete inactive information

The next task is to reduce the current validated database to the nominal 5000 entries which can fit in the format of the W6GO/K6HHD QSL Manager list. Jan resorts the data by the field that indicates the last month in which "Activity" was shown. The entries that are the oldest are then deleted, thus holding the number of QSL routes to the amount that will print in the list. Valid entries are not deleted until they have appeared in at least one "key" issue.

#### Prepare Masters for publication

When Jan has reduced the validated database to a quantity that will fit in the printed list, then the "masters" are prepared for the printer. The masters for the data pages of the list are printed on a daisy-wheel Diablo printer. Two pages from the Diablo are pasted together side by side to make a master for pages 1, 2, or 3. The QTH List and the rest of the information on the back page is printed on a Hewlett-Packard LaserJet Series II. After Jan "pastes up" the masters, then it's off to the printer. What you see in the final product is reduced about 50% from the size of the masters that are submitted to the printer.

#### Process Documentation

The process described above is documented in a work book that we are continually revising, in our attempt to best utilize the power of the computer. The book is 21 pages long, followed by another 18 pages that describe the Paradox Scripts used in the process. Many of these scripts are run just to verify the validity and consistency of the data. We try to use every possible method to bring you an accurate and timely product.

#### Mailing Process

While the list is being printed, Jan reviews the Subscriber database for the last time and prints labels. Lists sent to U.S. addresses are mailed second class, which requires that the mailing be prepared for the Post Office in a specified manner. A program (in QuickBasic) reviews the mailing list and then produces labels in the order which fits the USPS requirements. It also provides Jan with the statistics required to fill out the USPS paperwork from which they charge us for postage. Second class mailings are bundled as follows: First, any Zip code with 6 or more pieces must be bundled separately. Then, any remaining group of 6 or more pieces to the same first three zip code digits is bundled separately, then any remaining group of 6 or more to the same state. Jan takes extra time to carefully bundle these with rubber bands or string and adds a "post-it" to the outside copy to assist the Post Office in sorting. The "post-it" is marked with either three or five digits of a zip code, or with the two-letter State designation. We believe that this extra consideration for the Post Office pays off in the excellent service we have experienced from Second Class mail. We regard the Post Office as part of our team in producing the list, and we do everything we can to make their part of the job more efficient. Besides, the USPS folks are great people to work with, especially here in Rio Linda.

The labels are printed on an Okidata Microline 82A printer that is used exclusively for printing labels. As the labels feed in from the bottom in an Okidata printer, they can be left in the machine between uses without problems. Jan affixes the labels to the lists with a ScriptoMatic labeler. This labeler has reduced Jan's labeling time from 10 hours for an issue to a little over an hour. The labeler is fully automatic when it is labeling envelopes and the like, but when it is labeling the list it must be assisted and encouraged. And Jan really knows how to talk to the labeler!

#### Here we go again!

As soon as the lists are delivered to the Post Office in Rio Linda, the process starts anew for the next month.

